



PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

TO: All Media
FROM: Mike Raber, Senior Planner
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DATE: June 10, 2010
SUBJECT: **Sedona Community Plan Update**

Community Plan Update – How does the current Community Plan address the issues?

The City of Sedona is in the process of updating its Community Plan, which is required at least every 10 years by state law. The Sedona Community Plan is the City's state-mandated general plan that guides the City in making decisions on future development and land use regulations, initiating specific planning programs and priorities and funding. Although the update process may take over two years to complete, for the next several months, the City and the community will be determining the key issues that need to be addressed in this update.

The following describes the top five issues in 2001 during the 2001-2003 Plan update process; how they were addressed in the current Community Plan and their status today.

TOP FIVE ISSUES IN THE 2002 COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE (2001)

ISSUE #1:

State Route 179 Widening: Concerns regarding the visual impact of the proposed four and five lane design.

COMMUNITY PLAN AND FOLLOW-UP:

The Community Plan addressed this concern in considerable detail, advocating the need for a 2 and 3-lane roadway design that was "context-sensitive". These Community Plan recommendations were considered by ADOT in revising their approach to the highway design, with the creation of a "Needs-Based Implementation Plan. Construction of the roadway is now nearing completion.

ISSUE #2:

Open Space and National Forest: On-going support for open space preservation and no land trades on the National Forest.

COMMUNITY PLAN AND FOLLOW-UP:

The “Growing Smarter” legislation, passed in 1998 and 2000, required the inclusion of an Open Space Element. The Community Plan’s Open Space Element placed an emphasis on:

- Regional open space and the regional resolutions passed by Yavapai County and the other Verde Valley communities.
- Continued support for Amendment 12 to the USFS Plan
- Policies related to the urban interface between private and public lands
- Open space preservation on State Trust lands and along highway corridors.
- Completion of USFS trails network around the City.

Since 2001, Yavapai County adopted the Verde Valley Regional Plan, the Verde Valley Land Preservation Institute was formed to pursue the preservation of open space in the Verde Valley, the Sedona-area trails network was completed and opportunities to preserve additional open space along highway 89A were realized through new development proposals.

ISSUE #3:

Community Character/Local Needs: Concerns that visitor needs may be given higher priority than those of the residents and the need for detailed planning on SR 89A in west Sedona to address establishing a sense of community and the visual aspect of the corridor.

COMMUNITY PLAN AND FOLLOW-UP:

The most significant changes to the Plan reduced the locations for lodging uses so more areas would be available for general commercial development. The Plan also advocated allowing housing units in commercial zones. The discussion regarding the need for detailed planning and the recommended characteristics for the corridor were already in the Plan.

Over the past three years, there has been considerable discussion on moving forward with specific planning and development code provisions for the commercial corridor. The Heart-of-Sedona Blue Sky concept plan was also completed and guided a Plan amendment request for the former USFS ranger station site on Brewer Road. The City also adopted Main Street and Character District Guidelines and amended the Land Development Code to allow housing in commercial zones (mixed use development).

ISSUE #4:

Lodging/Timeshares: Concerns regarding the need for a balance of lodging uses within the commercial land area and concerns regarding the use of resources, not contributing to the tax base and that timeshares did not contribute to a sense of community.

COMMUNITY PLAN AND FOLLOW-UP:

Two significant changes were made to the Community Plan in response to these concerns:

- A reduction in the areas within the City where lodging uses are recommended in the Plan.
- An objective was added to the Plan to maintain a similar proportion of lodging to general commercial that existed in 2001, once the commercial area is built out.

Since 2001, there have been 10 total timeshare units approved vs. 730 units built, converted or approved between 1990 and 1998. Since 2001, the proportion of lodging to general commercial uses has increased slightly (2.8%) for a total of 40.6% of the commercial area. This percentage is expected to decrease to the 2001 percentage (approximately 38%) once the commercial area is built out.

ISSUE #5:

Environment: Concerns regarding adequate water resources and that the City should be more proactive on water conservation and environmental education.

COMMUNITY PLAN AND FOLLOW-UP:

An Environmental Element already existed in the Community Plan, but was now required by state law. Several objectives and actions were added to the Environmental Planning Element. Since 2001, ordinances were passed:

- Prohibiting new wood-burning stoves and fireplaces
- Requiring covered loads
- Including provisions for native plants in landscaping regulations.

The City also contributed to significant under-grounding of utilities on both SR 89A and 179.

A Water Resources Element was added to the Plan, also required by state law. This element advocated more education for water conservation in the community. Since 2001, a Water Conservation Advisory Committee was formed to evaluate and make recommendations regarding water conservation measures. The Committee has established a water conservation policy, community outreach, an annual Water Wise Festival, educational partnerships a Smart Rinse program and many others. Public participation is therefore very important in understanding the direction the Community Plan needs to take.

ITEMS NOT COMPLETED

There are additional actions in the Community Plan that have been completed and some that have not. There is no timeframe or strategy that measures progress. One of the goals of this current Community Plan update is to create a more strategic action program. Although the City has done a good job in implementing many of its planning recommendations, there are a number of items that have yet to be addressed. Here are a few:

- Specific Plans for the commercial areas have not been completed (Uptown/Creek area, Heart of Sedona, West Sedona Commercial Corridor Study). General planning recommendations from these planning efforts have instead been incorporated into the Sedona Community Plan.
- An access control plan including medians has not been adopted or pursued in west Sedona.
- Application of commercial zoning districts is essentially the same as pre-incorporation and does not directly address land use relationships, shared parking opportunities, highway corridor impacts and residential buffering.

- There are no established parking districts or park and ride locations that could further enhance the use of transit and encourage pedestrian activity and bicycle use.
- There is a lack of a coordinated strategy to address re-development potential, prioritize key properties and opportunities and link the recommendations of past planning efforts, including strong character and form for the different commercial areas.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months, we will provide a more detailed look at the spectrum of issues from community meetings and the many other comments that have been received. We will also focus more on presenting what is in the Community Plan and answers to the many questions that have come up over the last couple months. The City will also look at additional methods of getting community input and will continue to meet with community organizations throughout the process. Eventually, we will compile and consolidate what we have heard into key issues and start feeding back to the community.

The City Council recently approved the formation of a Citizens Steering Committee that will initially be reviewing the City's Public Participation Procedures. New outreach opportunities may result from that Committee's work.

Your Participation is Important!

There are many ways for you to provide input and get involved now.

- Planning and Zoning Commission meetings – Every third Tuesday of the month at City Hall (102 Roadrunner Drive, Sedona, AZ 86336).
- Working Team meetings – conducted twice a month at City Hall (look for the schedule on the City's website).
- Send your comments about the issues you think are important to Sedona:

Website – www.SedonaAZ.gov/planUpdate

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Return Comment Cards to City Hall or the Library.